

The Toronto Telegram. Dec. 24, 1948.
Schooner Days - DCCCLXXIX 879.
By C.H.J. Snider.

WAVE'S End? Xmas Eve Query.

Blue and silver ship on the Christmas card from Hedley Abbott, of Port Rowan (first of the 1948 fleet), and a close second from Port Colborne, blowing a cheery Merry Christmas blast from the breakwater foghorn above J. Russell Scott's smart gaff-rigged dinghy holds attention to Lake Erie. For these are all the Christmas Cards Schooner Days has received and will receive, thanks and thanks and thanks, ever the exchequer of the poor.

Was that the end of the *ERIE WAVE*? asks a correspondent with an indecipherable signature. The reason I ask that, forty years ago or 20 years after she drowned those 8 off Clear Creek, I heard in Port Rowan about a little vessel of that name that had sailed from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico and never came back. The story as I heard it was that two men from Long Point Bay had fitted out some old vessel named the *ERIE WAVE* and got her some how to Chicago and then into the old Illinois & Michigan canal lock at Lockport, Ill., and so to the Mississippi, and floated her down to New Orleans. They were lured by the stories of mahogany and rich cabinet woods being available for the clearing away, like black walnut and white pine were once in Upper Canada, and headed for some port called San Luis or San Felipe in the jungle country of Yucatan, where the very wharf piles were made of mahogany logs worth a king's ransom. How they fared on their venture the old boys who were yarning about it did not know but they were so specific in their descriptions of the outfit of this resurrected old venturer that their seemed to be some basis for their story. One of the items of her equipment they described was a homemade anchor something like a Nova Scotian killick, which is made of tough wood weighted with stone, only this was made from a big plough disk to which a heavy bar or shank had been bolted or shackled with eye-bolts. They said it held better than an iron mushroom in sand or clay and was comparatively light. They also said that this vessel was crank and tippy and had capsized with a load of pulpwood before she went mahogany hunting, and that was her last load, and they thought one of the Dow family, George or Robert, was her last owner. This all sounds like the *ERIE WAVE* of Port Burwell, which counted as owners W.Y. Emery, Post, Dow, and Hoskins in her tragic career. Part may be mythical and part garbled versions of the truth. The amount of authentic tragedy associated with the *ERIE WAVE*, made it easy for Lake Ontario sailors to say that the very name *ERIE* was "on-lucky," as they put it. They pointed out that Captain Joseph Braund, "Hungry Joe," of Port Hope, had nothing but hard luck with his first and only three-master, the *ERIE QUEEN* of Port Burwell, which he had brought to Ontario with pride and joy. He lost her after various mishaps through her running aground in the St. Lawrence, near Crossover Light. She had a cargo of grain that swelled and burst up her decks. Our information is that she was refloated and became the tow barge *C.C. BUELL*.

Other Port Hoppers would site the hard luck of "Roaring Dan" (Donald) Manson and other masters had with the *ERIE BELLE*, ending up with her having to run the Niagara River to escape

the Tonawanda Sheriff. She escaped Uncle Sam and Niagara Falls by popping into French Creek but there she rotted under mortgage held by a Canadian bank until tramps set her on fire and burned her to the waters edge. Her bottom became a tool scow for harbour contractors. She went to her grave at last in Lake Ontario, east of Toronto's Eastern Gap, about 1917. Other masters who had hard luck with her were Capt. Scott, of Port Hope, and Captain Duncan McLeod. She lost her square-rigged foremast once on Lake Erie, taking 5 men overboard, and she was also dismasted off Bronte on Lake Ontario. The crapehangers on the fair name of Erie also cited the *ERIE STEWART* named after as sweet a little girl as you could find between Port Burwell and Port Dover, where the schooner belonged. The vessel was built too deep in the hold, which made her slow and unable to carry a full load into some harbours. It would hardly account for her knocking the lighthouse over at Southampton and battering herself to pieces on the outside of the harbour of refuge under Chantry Island. The "on-lucky," critics of course overlooked the good luck, prosperous voyages, triumphs over the wind and water, and lengthy lives, which also marked the career of all those well-built Erie vessels. All except the *ERIE WAVE*.

The photo of Lake Erie's Raby Head, with very fine sky, by your staff photographer Van, was a most attractive feature in *Schooner Days*, writes Rowley Murphy, ARCA. Raby Head is the finest headland on Lake Ontario, or on any other lake to our mind. The name Crawford in your story of the *ERIE WAVE* brought me up standing, so to speak, as my ancient pioneer relatives of Brookside Farm, on the shores of Lake Erie, about 5 miles west of Port Maitland, were and are, (only one is left) Crawfords, of the same name as the principals in the *ERIE WAVE* drama. Grandfather Crawford was a shipwright as well as later a very prosperous farmer. In the past few years I have been trying to make time to see the place again, to find out especially if the models of schooners I was allowed to play with carefully in 1902 are still in existence. There was one I was very fond of, the vessel being about the size of the *J.B. KITCHEN*, but without her square-topsail, which was beautifully made, and I have not forgotten my tears when on floating her in a tub, some of her rail cap, glued on, came adrift. I remember also another larger model of a three-masted square rigged ship, which I think was of a lake vessel. Could be, you know. The square rigged ship *CITY OF TORONTO* was built here in front of the Royal York site, and Buffalo had two full rigged ships, and there were others, but they were rare. In the old carpenter shop, consisting of a parent shop with almost endless additions, there were chests containing beautiful moulding planes and other tools, and several half models of local fishing boats, not unlike sharp ended Mackinaws, but with more of a rake to stem and sternpost than Bronte boats.

(Picture) Half a mile east of Clear Creek, on Norfolk Counties 110 ft. clay banked shore, ERIE WAVE was lost.